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World Food Programme

Journal

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WFP'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Southern Africa
COOPERATION WORKS

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Journal

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Interview with Ms Bertini

Over a year has passed since Catherine Bertini became head of the World Food Programme on 6 April 1992. Francis Mwanza interviewed Ms Bertini to ask her for her views on WFP's future direction.

Ms Bertini, it is now a year since you became head of WFP. How has the year been?

Very exciting. I came at a time when some of our major emergency operations were beginning. Ten days after joining WFP, we published a Joint FAO/WFP food and crops assessment report on Southern Africa and then undertook one of the largest – and certainly most successful – projects aimed at providing food to nearly 18 million people who were at risk from starvation in the region. Our major intervention in Somalia began in May, one month after my arrival, with the first ship to arrive in Mogadishu harbour in many months. During the year, WFP also began providing massive amounts of food to be distributed by UNHCR in the former Yugoslavia and, of course, in many other relief operations around the world.

The Cold War is over, yet conflicts and civil strife are increasing. How will this affect the future of food aid?

We are assisting people now in the former Yugoslavia, in Tajikistan, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. In fact our involvement in countries that were affected by the Cold War has increased dramatically – Angola being an important example. As we seem to be working more and more in countries afflicted by very bloody and tragic circumstances, we will be spending a lot of resources on emergency feeding.

Will that put a strain on the overall available resources for aid?

Certainly; some countries have already told us that because of the increase in emergencies they are not in a position to increase their development contributions. But I am optimistic that over the long-term that won't be the case.

Zimbabwe WFP Thomas Haskell

Urban poverty is mounting in many developing countries. What are the implications for WFP's future development activities since it has traditionally worked in rural areas?

WFP does have a bent toward agricultural work, that is true; and also a strong commitment to the environment. I would expect that those would continue to be important areas of work. However, the question on how best to assist people will once again be debated at the CFA in May 1994. But no matter what is decided, we have to ensure that the way we use food aid is to help people become self-reliant.

What role will WFP play in Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States?

Right now, of course, we are serving only in an emergency role – providing food to people caught up in the middle of war and civil strife. That is true in the former Yugoslavia and in the four former Soviet republics that I have mentioned before. Some bilateral donors have requested us to help manage bilateral assistance in these countries. However, I don't see our long-term involvement, beyond the current emergency, in certain countries which are not essentially poor countries. Croatia, for instance, had a pre-war per-capita income equal to that of Austria. However, some former Soviet republics are very very poor and once their designation as least developed countries is finalized it is possible some will qualify for WFP food aid.

Several countries are threatened with a total breakdown in civil society. What can WFP do to prevent the recurrence of humanitarian tragedies like the one in Somalia?

We cannot, unfortunately, prevent natural disasters from actually happening but we can, through disaster mitigation – digging for new sources of water, building irrigation

canals and dykes, planting specific trees to avoid flooding and other methods – fend off the worst impact of such disasters.

Where civil strife is concerned, our task is even harder. No aid agency has the control of whether war or civil unrest will break out but we can be there to help prevent extreme suffering among the affected people.

Aid officials are repeatedly asked "Does the aid get to the people in need?". Does it?

Absolutely, we have seen examples of emergency aid reaching people in need. In Somalia, we saw starving people; and then saw them being fed; and now we see the same people providing for themselves. Last year, southern Africa was hit by the worst drought in living memory, leaving 18 million people at risk of starvation. Yet there were never pictures of starving people in the region because the food aid we sent, in massive amounts, reached the people in need.

WFP Thomas Haskell

Providing school meals encourages attendance at schools and training centres.

The substantial increase in disasters of human or natural origin has resulted in more than 60 per cent of WFP resources being committed to relief activities. What happens to its development activities?

After we get through the period of tight development budgets, partly because of the increases in emergencies, we will see a combination of several cycles coming together at once. The cycle of a decrease in emergency needs; the cycle of the economies of donor countries getting stronger as they move out of recession; and, concurrently, the cycle of WFP being in a position to define what it is we do well in development, a project that will be ready in 1994.

What is your view on the relationship between emergency relief and development activities?

In the majority of countries we have seen some kind of emergency. Whether the emergencies are natural or man-made we can't just stick our head in the sand, saying we only handle development assistance. We have a strong development portfolio and we respond quickly to emergencies. Our ability to respond well to emergencies is due, in large part, to the strength of our development programmes. The fact that we have food throughout the world destined for development activities which can be moved quickly to an emergency situation makes a big difference. The fact that we have resources, offices worldwide and staff trained for development who can also support emergency operations makes a big difference.

Can countries graduate out of food aid?

Over the last 30 years, WFP has helped countries which not only are no longer food-aid recipients but are now potential donors. The Republic of Korea was once a recipient of food aid and now certainly has one of the most vibrant economies in the world.

Singapore was a recipient of food aid; nobody would call Singapore poor now. Venezuela was a food-aid recipient, Greece was once a food aid recipient, Hungary was. Other countries, such as Mexico, are likely to graduate out of food aid.

What lessons has WFP learned from relief and development activities in the last 30 years?

One lesson we have learned is that we need to leave behind something concrete. After an emergency operation we must leave behind the systems and infrastructure that we developed to deliver and distribute food aid and, most importantly, we should leave behind a group of trained local people, people who worked on the project. These resources could then be employed in development. For instance the WTOE trucks, in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the staff that drives and manages the trucks, first assisted in famine relief in Ethiopia in 1984. Then they continued to move food assistance through Ethiopia and Eritrea – for development and emergency purposes. Now they are playing a vital role in relief deliveries in neighbouring countries like Somalia and Rwanda.

Another lesson is that cooperation in relief and development operations is vital. In southern Africa last year, unprecedented cooperation by UN

agencies, recipient governments, non-governmental organizations and donors was a key element in averting famine and starvation in the region which was affected by a devastating drought.

On the development side, we have grown and expanded into different projects, learning as we went about projects that work and those that don't work. For instance, we do a lot more now to try and educate girls in schools in regions and countries where it is still not, unfortunately, popular. We are using monetization in more creative ways. We are expanding greatly south-south trade by buying more food in developing countries for relief and development activities. In fact, we are the largest UN purchaser of goods in developing countries.

How do you see the future of food aid and WFP?

There will be an important place for WFP in the international aid community for as long as there are poor countries, desperately poor people and donors willing to provide food aid – either in kind or in cash – to help build self-reliance.

Do you wish for a time when there is no need for food aid?

I wish for a time when there is no abject poverty but I don't think it is realistic to say the need for food aid will ever go away. Even in countries that are wealthy, there are poor people and there are disparities between the food available to the rich and the poor. Even if every country was to become self-reliant in food there would still be a humanitarian desire to want to donate some of the excess to those in need, not necessarily to another country or region.

WFP Pasqualina Di Sirio

All in a days work. Ms Bertini and children clean dishes at a WFP feeding centre in El Salvador.

China

Saving for a better future

WFP/Pierre Serge Bolduc

Su Qing Hoa is a young woman farmer from the Zhuang ethnic group in south China. "Hoa means flower" she says. With her quick smile she looks young for her 35 years. She and her husband have three children: a teenage boy of 15, and a boy and a girl of eight and 11.

Hoa lives in Xiang-Bi Village in Ma-Shan County, which borders Viet Nam and south China. It is an area of rolling hills and spectacular karstic formations, similar to the ones depicted on classical Chinese paintings that tourists like to buy.

The problem is that there are too many of these beautiful geological formations and not enough arable land for the large population. Also, most hills lost their forest cover during the era of the "Great Leap Forward" when trees were cut-down to fuel steel furnaces. As a result, there are now large areas of wasteland and an estimated 80,000 landless peasants a year migrate to coastal industrial zones in search of seasonal work on farms or in factories.

Before Hoa joined a WFP-assisted land development project, most of her time was spent taking care of her family and helping her husband cultivate their small farm. In the 1980 land reform, they received 0.22 hectares of land, on which they grow rice, corn and vegetables. The family also receives a Government subsidy of 150 kilogrammes of rice per year. With such a small farm they could not produce enough food or generate sufficient income to feed their family and purchase essential commodities and clothes.

As no more land is available and credit facilities are limited, Hoa's options were few until the WFP project started. After talking to the village chief, Hoa volunteered to participate in the hope of receiving some fruit trees to manage.

She started by digging trenches and making compost for fruit orchards and timber plantations, for which she was given food-for-work rations of rice. Because of her skills and interest in the project, Hoa was chosen to receive a 20-year contract to manage an area of 2,000 square metres of orchard. She is responsible for maintaining 300 fruit trees and although she is unable to read Chinese, she knows that her contract specifies that she can keep 80 per cent of the net revenues for herself. Once the trees are in full production, she hopes to receive up to 2,500 yuan (US$500) a year from the sale of the fruit which will increase the family's income fourfold.

This extra income is badly needed as in the countryside the cost of living is rising rapidly and education is no longer free. The Su family need 600 yuan (US$120) a year to pay for school expenses for their three children. Most of this is to pay for tuition and boarding fees for the oldest son whose school is 30 kilometres from the village.

Hoa will receive WFP rations for her work on the plantation for two more years, which will help to feed the family. To pay for school fees she is raising a pig which she hopes to sell for 400 Yuan (US$80) before school starts in September. The pig – the original piggy bank – is exclusively for the children's school expenses. The rest of the money will come from the sale of chickens and rabbits. Hopefully the fruit trees will start to generate income by the time the other children reach middle-school level.

"No one from this village has had a child in university" she says. "I want our children to go as high as possible. The whole village will help if necessary. It is a Zhuang tradition."

by Pierre Serge Bolduc

Pierre Serge Bolduc is the WFP Adviser in China.

Jordan

A full stomach and no truancy

Just after ten o'clock the school bell rings, announcing the morning break at the Suweimeh Village Girls School in the Jordan Valley. Girls in their white and blue plaid uniforms pour eagerly out of classrooms and gather into little clusters for their midday meal.

Black plastic bags are pulled out of schoolbags and little hands clutch *khubiz*, a flat round bread. The bread comes from home, made from WFP-supplied wheat flour, and the school provides cheese or luncheon meat as an accompaniment.

"All 137 girls in our primary school receive this snack every day," explains the young Principal, Talhawa Al-Bakheit.

As in many other schools in Jordan's economically depressed rural areas, the snack is part of the WFP assisted Government campaign to improve literacy. As well as assisting schools in the Jordan Valley, the scheme also extends to Kerak, Ma'an, Tafileh and Aqaba in southern Jordan, and Mafraq in the northeast.

"It certainly encourages students to come to school and stay through the day," says Mansour Hajahjeh, a teacher at the boys school in Deir Alla, explaining how truancy has decreased since the WFP project began. "If the boys think of skipping school for some reason, they prefer to wait at least until they get their snack," he says, only half joking.

Ali Mohammed, who is 11 years old and comes from a family of 10, looks forward to the free snack at school. "I sometimes take some home for my little brother," he says. The eagerness with which children await the school meal is not surprising, considering the meagre breakfast most of them have at home.

It is not only children in primary schools who are pleased with their morning snack. Free food rations of wheat flour, cheese or meat, beans and tea also attract more students to adult-literacy classes.

One of the main aims of the project is to improve primary-school enrolment and eradicate illiteracy, and things seem to be moving in the right direction. Since WFP began providing food assistance for schools over 16 years ago, the net enrolment rate at primary schools has reached 88 per cent and illiteracy has dropped to 20 per cent.

Hassan Ala Al-Deen, Director of Student Affairs at the Ministry of Education, points out that adult-literacy centres have been established in selected schools in rural Jordan. Moreover, elementary education is now compulsory and also free.

In Deir Alla District, 23-year-old Khwala heard of literacy classes from her neighbour. She joined because she was eager to learn to read and write, but food aid acted as an incentive. "Of course it helps my family eat better. My husband is a construction worker; sometimes he has work but often he doesn't," Khwala explains.

In another village seven kilometres away, 34-year-old Houreih Shbeilat says that thanks to the classes she can now read fluently and help her children with their school work. Houreih now wants to attend a training course for rural women where she can learn income-generating skills to help with the family income. These courses are also assisted by WFP and are organized by a Jordanian NGO, The Queen Alia Fund for Social Welfare.

The WFP assistance has given impetus to the Education Ministry's efforts. "There is no doubt that food aid is a crucial factor in Jordan's literacy campaign," says Mohammed Al-Rashed, Director of the Education Department of south Shouneh District.

by Jumana Tamimi

Jumana Tamimi is a journalist with the Women's Feature Service.

The opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily those of WFP.

Food aid
A historical perspective

Food aid can be said to have existed in one form or another for as long as society itself. Communities have always provided help to their members in times of famine, war or other emergencies. However, the modern history of food aid as aid by governments started in the nineteenth century, still in the form of emergency aid.

The first recorded legislation concerning food aid was in 1812 when the US Congress passed the "Act for the Relief of the Citizens of Venezuela" authorising the President to purchase goods to the value of US$50,000 – a considerable sum in 1812. In 1846-1847, during the Great Irish Famine, Britain provided £100,000 of Indian meal for distribution in Ireland – perhaps the first recorded case of what we now call triangular transactions – buying food aid in one developing country for use in another. Colonial powers accepted that providing famine relief for their colonies was a routine duty of colonial administration.

WFP Jeff Share

These earlier instances of food aid were all tied to emergencies. The US Congress did not authorise major long-term food-aid operations until after World War I in order to reconstruct war-ravaged European countries and prevent famine; more than six million tonnes of food was shipped under these programmes.

Although these quantities are small compared with more recent programmes, they set an important precedent for action during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when burdensome surpluses of cereals threatened the incomes of American farmers. In 1933 US Congress approved the Agricultural Adjustment Act which established the Commodity Credit Corporation and the Grain Stabilisation Board which became the vehicles for managing agricultural surpluses and the basis for the first structured food-aid programmes.

A big impetus was given to food aid during, and immediately after, the second world war. Under the US Lend-Lease Act of 1941 great quantities of agricultural products were shipped to the war allies. The Marshall Plan which followed the war was the largest transfer of bilateral aid in world history and set a precedent for large-scale programme food aid.

The aid was allocated directly to individual governments which sold the food through regular market channels, thus rehabilitating food-marketing systems as well as releasing hard currency which would have had to be spent on food imports. At the same time, it helped to reduce some of the US surpluses which would have led to disastrous falls in prices and ruined US farmers.

The great landmark for the creation of a permanent US food-aid programme, not connected with war and emergencies, was the enactment in 1954 of the "Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act", known as Public Law 480. Although frankly described as a "surplus disposal" instrument, it was conditioned by humanitarian and commercial motives as well as the political motive of gaining friends and supporting allies. In the late 50s and early 60s immense volumes of food aid were distributed under PL 480, much exceeding current food aid from all sources. The largest recipient was India, where food aid helped the Government to provide the resources for investments in irrigation, transport, etc, which, together with the development of new seeds, were the basis of the Green Revolution – justifying the claim of its advocates that food aid can be a transitional and self-liquidating form of aid

During the 50s and 60s the US alone provided about 98 per cent of total food aid. This naturally created pressure within the US to spread the burden more widely: to "internationalise" food aid. This was made possible by the emergence of food surpluses in the European Community and the EC policy of paying agricultural subsidies to European farmers – the Common Agricultural Policy. Although the US is still the largest food-aid donor, the EC, together with individual EC member countries, provide comparable volumes of food aid.

In 1967 a Food Aid Convention came into effect. For the first time a range of donor countries accepted a binding commitment, for a number of years ahead, to make fixed tonnage contributions of cereals. This kind of

Costa Rica

Happiness is owning your own land

Don Raúl Chamorro Chavarría, with his wife Antonia and three of their eight children, moved to a 3.5 hectare plot of land in the *Ulima* settlement 10 months ago. *Ulima* means turtle in *maleco*, one of the Indian languages still spoken in Costa Rica.

The family is happy to finally own a plot of land as for years they have been "...wandering, renting here and there".

The land was given to them by the Costarican Institute of Agrarian Development (IDA) under a resettlement project assisted by WFP. Since 1991, WFP has helped 2,890 families by providing them with food rations until they are able to harvest their first crops and feed themselves. In addition, WFP's Non-food Items Unit provided the settlement with agricultural tools and desks for the school, through a donation from the Netherlands.

The Chamorro Chavarría family have built a tin-roofed house with a fence around it and planted plantain, manioc, peppers and papaya on their land. Fortunately, their eldest son, 27-year-old Johnny, helps his father with the farming and their land looks well cared for.

According to Don Raúl, "It was very hard at the beginning. We arrived here with nothing, just our bare hands. Without the regular monthly food rations I would have had to abandon my plot to support my family by working for a meagre wage as a daily labourer on somebody else's farm. Now I no longer need to sell my labour to the rich, I can work my own land."

Like most people in rural Costa Rica, Don Raúl is strongly attached to the land, farming is what he enjoys and now that he has his own land and his first crops have been harvested he is confident in the future and feels more secure.

WFP/Eliécer Sánchez

Doña Antonia cooks the family's meal in their new house.

Don Raúl says that the project has met his and the other settler families' most urgent needs.

"I only hope that the valuable aid we receive can reach all the people in the world who are in a similar situation".

by Alfonso Barboza and Beatrice Bonnevaux

Alfonso Barboza works for the Costarican Institute for Agrarian Development. Beatrice Bonnevaux is the WFP Director of Operations in Costa Rica.

commitment has never been achieved in the case of financial aid and is a striking demonstration of the strong political support for food aid. This, in turn, is a major argument for assuming that food aid is at least partly "additional" and hence not subject to the criticism that other things being equal, food aid is inferior to financial aid. A UN target for financial aid – 0.7 per cent of GNP of donor countries – has not led to the same binding commitments and has never been reached. By contrast, the commitments under the Food Aid Convention have not only been reached but regularly exceeded.

Multilateral food aid under UN auspices may be said to have started in 1943 – the year which saw the establishment of both the FAO and the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Under the original plans proposed by the first Director-General of FAO, John Boyd Orr, a World Food Board would have been established to distribute food according to needs. Although these ideas were turned down and UNRRA was terminated in 1949, this end to multilateral food aid was only temporary. In 1960, as part of the preparation for the first UN development decade, the General Assembly invited FAO to study possible multilateral arrangements for "the mobilisation of available surplus foodstuffs and their distribution in areas of greatest need". This led to the establishment of the World Food Programme.

To prevent the new Programme from competing with the bilateral programmes which supplied large quantities of food aid on a programme basis, WFP was limited to providing food aid on a project basis. Recently, however, emergency food aid has become increasingly important. The significance of WFP is measured not only by its direct share in total food aid – which is similar to the World Bank's share in financial aid – but also by the coordinating role for all food aid which WFP's governing body, the Committee for Food Aid Policies and Programmes (CFA), plays at the global level and WFP field offices at the country level.

What of the future? Ten years ago, when WFP held its 20th Anniversary Seminar in The Hague, the requirements were considered to be:

- **More food aid** – estimated requirements were thought to be 20 to 25 million tonnes, and much higher if nutritional needs were taken into account, compared with the 15.6 million tonnes delivered in 1992. While these volumes of food aid look very high compared with present volumes, they would do little more than restore the situation of 30 to 40 years ago.
- **More food aid in cereals** and less dairy produce.
- **Linking programme aid** – linking bulk food aid provided bilaterally for balance of payments and budgetary support directly with poverty-focused activities of various kinds.
- **More multilateral food aid** – by taking into account the advantages of multilateral compared with bilateral food aid.
- **More efficient food aid** – including improved project design, monitoring and evaluation.

WFP

Mr. Allam Hassan Allam, Chairman of the Wadi Halfa Commission and Mr Hans Kamberg, Resident Representative of the Sudan, sign an extension to WFP's first project – 001 Sudan – for resettlement in Sudan.

- **Better international arrangements for food aid** this related largely to a reform of the principles of surplus disposal which appeared to be concerned with protecting commercial trade instead of maximising the developmental impact of food aid.

These six principles are still applicable today, although conditions have changed in some respects. Progress has been made in the direction indicated 10 years ago.

It is possible that in future food surpluses will be reduced, particularly if the Uruguay Round of GATT leads to a reform of agricultural policies in the major industrial countries.

It is all the more important to give food aid a developmental rationale, divorced from the idea of surplus disposal. Today's large stock of experience with food aid has led to various ways by which this developmental rationale has been implemented and can be expanded.

One development that must be hoped for in the future is a better relationship between food aid and financial aid in the UN system. The present separation has largely historical origins. The comparative advantage of food aid in any future combination is that it is more clearly targeted – and to some extent self-targeted – towards poverty reduction and social security.

This suggests an important role for food aid, particularly in connection with the structural adjustment and stabilisation programmes of the World Bank and IMF, which are often criticised for lacking a social dimension and a "human face".

In future, food aid can and should be closely tied with human and sustainable development. Human resources and the environment are increasingly emphasised as part of a broader concept of development. In both these areas food aid is well qualified to play a prominent role.

In the field of human resources improving children's nutrition, using food aid for school meals and training programmes, and channelling additional resources to poor households through food-for-work projects, are obvious ways of expanding the use of food aid. In the field of environment, food aid can support the many labour-intensive activities involved in reforestation, land reclamation and irrigation.

by H.W. Singer

Professor H.W. Singer is Emeritus Professor of Economics and Professorial Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, England.

The opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily those of WFP.

WFP/Torben Due

Misol-Ha, in the Mexican State of Chiapas, is a place of extraordinary natural beauty, with a 35-metre-high waterfall, a small lake and a river with hundreds of small cascades, all surrounded by green tropical rainforest. The name means "water than runs" in *Chol* - the language spoken by the indigenous people who live in the area.

Part of the Lacandonian Jungle, film makers found it an ideal location for the early Tarzan movies. As its fame spread, the area started to attract tourists and the National Indigenous Institute (INI) hit on a good way to help the local population while protecting the environment.

A tourist centre has been set up to generate income for the local population and provide a better service for tourists. WFP gave the funds to buy the construction material and the community supplied the labour. WFP assistance is in the form of a loan which will be paid back and used to finance other ventures.

This is just a small part of a larger WFP-assisted project which provides food aid for 63,400 indigenous children who live in boarding houses so that they can attend primary school.

The Centre consists of 10 bungalows, an administration building and a restaurant which is in the process of being built. The INI supervises the project and care has been taken to change the environment as little as possible. Local people are taught the importance of preserving the forest, which is not an easy task as most of them are subsistence farmers who practise slash-and-burn agriculture and who have always viewed the forest as an obstacle rather than an asset. However, the local community is now convinced of the benefits accruing to the land from conserving the woods and 20 hectares of land has been turned into a natural park.

A major problem was how to convert a group of unorganized subsistence farmers into managers of a tourist resort. The staff who run the Centre have now been trained in all aspects of their job. Considerable progress has been made and tourists are welcomed with the *Chol's* natural friendliness combined with professional efficiency. The next job is to train the cooks to prepare meals that tourists like, as the local dishes are not to everyone's taste.

The Centre is owned by a cooperative made up of 60 local people, 18 of whom are employed full time at the Centre. In addition most members participate in committees which oversee the management of the area. One of their constant problems is refuse collection. It is amazing how much rubbish tourists who come to enjoy unspoiled nature leave behind when they depart.

Misol-Ha combines two important aspects of WFP's work: preserving the environment and helping poor indigenous people. Tarzan would have approved.

by Torben Due

Torben Due is the WFP Director of Operations in Mexico.

Sri Lanka

An opportunity for the landless

WFP/Frans Lemmens

A new settler family with all their belongings.

In Hennanigala Village in Mahaweli, lives Bandia, a member of the *Veddah* community, the jungle people who were the original inhabitants of Sri Lanka. He moved to the village in 1982 as survival in the forest had become increasingly difficult. The transition from a hunter's life to settled agriculture was difficult.

The 167 *Veddah* families settled in the village all received WFP food rations until they could coax enough food out of their land to sustain themselves. "Without food aid it would have been impossible," Bandia says.

Although Bandia still misses the old ways of his native village which is now part of a forest reserve, he knows it is not possible to go back to that way of life. "In any case, the younger people prefer this new life," he says.

Vimala, who is 28, agreed. She appreciates her present way of life. Her parents moved here with their 11 children at the same time as Bandia. All the children are educated and Vimala, the eldest, works in a nearby hospital.

The new settlers are being helped as part of the Mahaweli Development Programme, the country's largest integrated development project, which harnesses the waters of the Mahaweli Ganga, the country's longest river, to generate hydro-electric power and increase Sri Lanka's rice production, the staple diet of the vast majority of its people.

"Now 20 per cent of the country's rice is produced on 12 per cent of its paddy land and the average paddy yield in the Mahaweli area is almost five tonnes per hectare per season, compared with a national average of only 3.6 tonnes," says Mr Gunatilaka, Director General of the Mahaweli Authority. "The programme also generates 55 per cent of the power for the national grid and provides employment for an estimated one million people."

Each settler family is given one hectare of irrigable land and a quarter of a hectare of land for a homestead. The Mahaweli Authority levels the agricultural land, but the settlers have to prepare it for cultivation.

The new village has a school, clean drinking water and basic health-care facilities provided by the Government. Dr Fernando is one of the doctors who tours the villages, travelling throughout the month to cover the 28 villages assigned to her. A common problem among new settlers, especially children, is malnutrition. Dr Fernando says that the WFP food rations go a long way towards countering this problem and improving health.

The new settlers are optimistic when they see the level of prosperity achieved by older settlers in nearby villages. The lush paddy fields bear testimony not only to increasing production levels but also to the farmers' rising incomes.

Some villagers have invested money from their land in small commercial ventures. Chandralata Rajapaksa runs a bakery and a grocery store in the village while her husband manages their paddy fields. They started the store in 1983, a year after moving to the area with a few tins of food, but as paddy production rose they were able to invest more money in the business. "Today, we earn more from the grocery and bakery than we do from the land," Chandralata says.

"The programme has now reached a take-off point and the settlers have moved beyond the subsistence level. I feel there will be a dramatic increase in productivity over the next 12 months," said Mr Gunatilaka.

by Pamposh Dhar

Pamposh Dhar is the Information and Training Officer in WFP's New Delhi office.

The growth of WFP

WFP/Photo M. Bouquet

WFP/Thomas Hindell

Since WFP began operations in 1963 it has grown from a small experimental programme to become the largest multilateral food distributor in the world. Either due to the failure of economic and social systems, or to disasters of natural and human origin, more people are in need of humanitarian assistance now than ever before.

Today, more than 42 million people receive direct assistance through WFP emergency operations and development projects. Emergency work has so come to dominate the Programme's work in recent years that WFP has become synonymous with disaster relief. In 1992 WFP handled 5.2 million tonnes of emergency food aid for nearly 28 million people.

During its 30-year history, WFP has linked the provision of food aid to promoting economic and social development at the household and community level. In 1992 alone, some 15 million people received food through development projects – a considerable achievement for an agency originally created to deal with agricultural surpluses.

WFP/Paul Mitchell

A multilateral agency is born

Between 1946 and 1960 several attempts were made to establish an international body to regulate international trade and deal with surpluses produced by food exporting countries. None of these attempts were successful, mainly because some countries objected to interference in their trade relations.

The difficulty in establishing an international food board was largely due to the way the problem was defined. For the more developed countries the problem was how to dispose of agricultural surpluses without disrupting the market or existing trade patterns. The use of food surpluses to assist poor countries was not even considered.

In 1955 a study by Mordecai Ezekiel, "Uses of Agricultural Surpluses to Finance Economic Development in Under-developed Countries", provided the breakthrough. Taking India as a model, the study analyzed the practical possibilities of using food

WFP/Armand Delcorr

A teacher demonstrates the use of nautical knots to students at a Vocational Training School which provides free meals made from WFP rations.

to assist economic and social development, focusing on ways to expand labour intensive projects. According to Mr Ezekiel, agricultural surpluses could finance additional investment in developing countries without competing with the sales of domestic products or with imports from other countries.

In October 1960, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 1496, which called on the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Secretary-General and appropriate specialized agencies to establish the necessary procedures to make available "the largest practical quantities of surplus food" for the benefit of food-deficit countries.

A study was made of the feasibility of arranging food mobilization and distribution multilaterally and its conclusions still form the basis of WFP's approach to promoting development: surplus food from one country can be used for the economic development of another, if part of a coherent aid programme, and "... freedom from hunger can ultimately be achieved only by freedom from poverty".

A report, based on the study, was placed before delegates to the 1961 FAO Conference. This stated that food aid could alleviate hunger and malnutrition by assisting development programmes in underdeveloped countries. However, the report cautiously recommended coordinated bilateral programmes rather than multilateral as there was considerable opposition to the latter. It was the head of the US delegation, George McGovern, who formally proposed establishing a multilateral programme with a fund of US$100 million in commodities and cash, to which the US was willing to contribute US$40 million.

WFP/Carlo Sanchez

Many WFP projects have brought clean drinking water to villages, improving health and making life easier for women and children who are usually the ones who have to collect water.

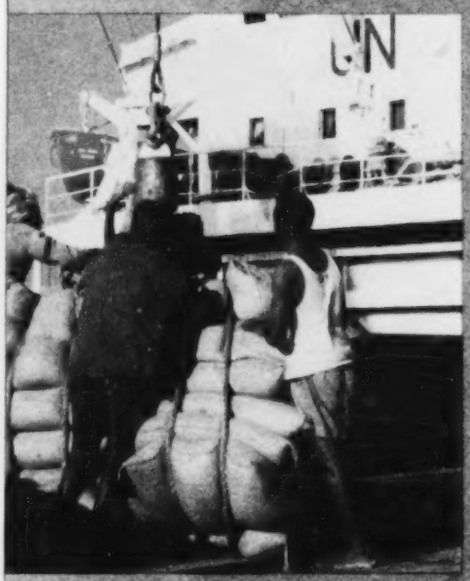
WFP/Benita Brindley

WFP projects help the poor to increase their incomes and to have more free time.

This initiative led to the FAO Conference and the UN General Assembly establishing the World Food Programme in August 1961, on the following basis:

- The agency would be launched for a three-year experimental basis from January 1963 to December 1965;
- all contributions would be voluntary;
- the agency would adhere to the established FAO Principles of Surplus Disposal.

At the first Pledging Conference in September 1962, 33 countries promised US$87.3 million. The World Food Programme was born.



WFP/Fred Mitchell

The early years

The Programme commenced activities with an emergency operation even before WFP was officially launched. In September 1962, an earthquake struck Iran, killing 12,000 people and destroying livestock and crops. WFP responded by shipping food to help the population survive the winter. Another emergency operation followed – a hurricane in Thailand. During 1963 and 1964, 14 emergency operations were dealt with. The Programme quickly learned the difficulties involved in responding to emergencies.

The first Executive Director, the late Mr A.H. Boerma, in his opening address to the Third Session of WFP's governing body in May 1963, expressed concern that the brief experience with emergency operations had shown that WFP should not be looked upon as "...an instantly ready tool for dealing with emergencies", but rather as a source of long-term aid for rehabilitation and reconstruction, as well as for development.

The first development project WFP assisted was for the resettlement of 50,000 Nubians in Sudan who had to leave their homes after the completion of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt. They were provided with food aid until they could harvest their first crops in their new settlement.

The Programme began to assist a range of economic and social development projects, ranging from labour-intensive agricultural projects to school-lunch programmes. These projects provided WFP with the experience needed to play a broader and more constructive role in the developing world.

By May 1963 the Programme had received 28 formal requests for food aid in support of economic and social development and by November 1964 this number had risen to 193. In

World Food Programme

During the past three decades WFP has invested approximately US$13 billion – more than 40 million tonnes of food aid – to combat hunger and promote economic and social development in the developing world. WFP food aid has been used to assist more than 1,600 development projects and 1,200 emergency operations, including help for refugees and displaced people. Altogether, hundreds of millions of poor people have benefited from WFP's work.

Within the UN system, WFP is now the largest source of grant assistance to developing countries; the largest source of assistance for poor women; and the largest provider of grant assistance for environmental activities in developing countries. The Programme is also the UN's largest purchaser of food and services in developing countries and a major supporter of south-south trade.

WFP, which has its headquarters in Rome, Italy, has staff posted in 85 countries, serving more than 90 developing nations. However, despite its considerable growth, WFP's administrative expenses are less than six per cent of annual expenditure, one of the lowest of all development assistance agencies.

WFP/France Mattioli

No country can develop without an educated population.

December 1965, the end of the experimental period, the Programme had approved 116 development projects and 32 emergency operations in 25 countries.

While there was clearly a need for WFP, there were still various constraints. The Programme's time limit prevented it from tackling problems in poor countries which lacked the infrastructure to absorb food aid. Consequently, assistance was mainly concentrated in the Near East and North Africa, where countries had the administration and infrastructure needed to absorb aid effectively. In addition, the Programme had come up against a problem that continues today: how to help recipient governments cover the non-food costs of a project, including transport, storage and other expenses.

Participating governments consulted by Mr Boerma during 1964 were unanimous that WFP was a success and should be continued. Increased confidence on the part of donor countries translated into higher pledges. Contributions rose to US$320 million for the 1969-70 biennium – 160 per cent of the pledging target. Multilateral food aid was now recognised as an integral part of the United Nations system.

The 1970s

The period of steady growth and consolidation during the late 1960s changed abruptly in 1972 when there was a worldwide shortage of food. Major cereal-producing areas in developing countries, particularly in India and the former Soviet Union, were badly hit by adverse weather conditions and countries were forced to purchase unprecedented amounts of grain. This coincided with changes in the agricultural food-exporting developed countries, where wheat stocks fell to their lowest level in 20 years. Reserves sank and prices soared. In addition, currency devaluations and a sharp rise in oil prices contributed to a climate of insecurity and inflation. The effect on WFP was nearly devastating.

WFP/Terry Fincher

A female trainee learns surveying at the Botswana Agricultural College at Gaberone. Trainees have benefited from WFP supplies.

The lack of resources meant that the governing body was unable to approve new projects in October 1973. In addition, the number of existing recipients and the size of rations were cut, leaving only the minimum quantities necessary to keep projects operational. Despite these stringent measures, there remained a shortfall of more than 160,000 tonnes of commodities.

The Programme was saved by a concerted effort to find new donors. During 1973-74, missions

WFP/Fiona McDougall

On occasion WFP provides bagging equipment to ports as it is cheaper to ship grain in bulk and bag it on arrival.

WFP/Jeanette Van Acker

Providing food aid has enabled millions of women worldwide to feed their families.

were sent to various countries, including oil-producing Arab nations. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia offered a donation of US$30 million, the largest cash donation ever made. This donation marked a turning point as it came from a non-industrial developing country that was, and still is, a net importer of food commodities. It also marked an important change in the nature of donations to the Programme – away from the idea of surplus disposal towards a wider sharing of responsibility for those in need. The donation enabled WFP to purchase commodities at the beginning of 1975, some of which were bought in developing

WFP/Rein van Hasselt

WFP provides food aid to some their 14 million refugees and displaced people.

countries. Previously this had been impossible because of the lack of cash resources.

Two other important developments occurred during the 1970s. In December 1975, the UN General Assembly established the International Emergency Food Reserve (IEFR) to be placed at the disposal of WFP and to which all governments could contribute. This reserve, with a minimum annual target of 500,000 tonnes, has enabled WFP to respond quickly to emergency situations as food stocks held nationally or regionally can be called on in the early stages of an emergency and later replenished by WFP. Secondly, guidelines and criteria for food aid were drawn up which continue to provide a policy framework for the provision of all food aid.

Food aid for development

From its beginning, WFP aimed to serve as more than a mechanism for surplus disposal or providing charity to the poor. Early projects included a land-settlement project in Bolivia; the development of nomadic sheep husbandry in Syria; resettling nomads in Egypt; land reclamation and development in Morocco; and land settlement in Tanzania. Other projects contributed directly to the development of human resources by providing food for school children, expectant and nursing mothers, hospital patients and adults attending education centres.

The Programme gave special attention to creating employment and income through food-for-work

To improve food deliveries WFP runs its own truck fleets when necessary. This entails care and maintenance of trucks as well as making transport arrangements.

WFP projects benefit young and old alike.

programmes. In Bangladesh, a vulnerable-group development project, begun in 1975, continues to provide training in health, literacy and income-generation for women. Similar projects were started in Bolivia and Mexico, while major land-development programmes commenced in Egypt, Sudan, Korea and China. The largest single dairy project ever undertaken, "Operation flood" in India, increased milk production by 50 per cent and benefitted 30 million people.

Current trends

Donor commitments for development activities continued to increase until reaching a high point of US$778 million in 1988 – two thirds of WFP resources. Today, this trend has been reversed and emergency situations now consume more than 60 per cent of WFP's resources. For the current year, new development commitments are as low as US$250 million.

Although donor support has increased in favour of disaster relief, there may be a swing back to longer-term solutions, says the former Director of Project Design

WFP RESOURCES FROM INCEPTION[1]

1 Pledges include regular pledges, International Emergency Food Reserve, Protracted Refugee and Displaced Persons Projects and miscellaneous income.

WFP/Nicole Bredour

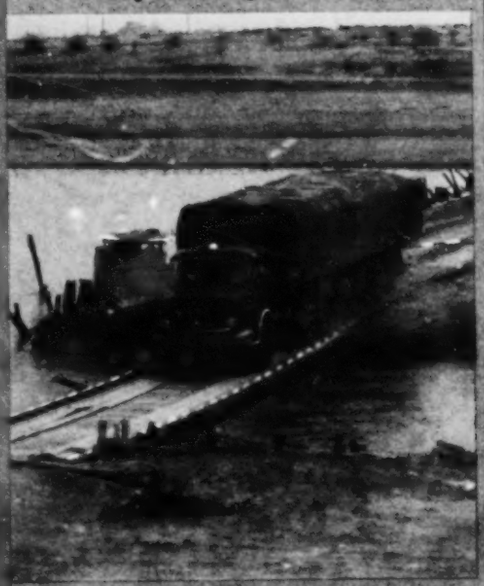
Improving health for mothers and children is one of WFP's priorities.

WFP/Sarah Errington

Helping farmers to increase agricultural production is the best way of enabling countries to become self-sufficient.

and Programming Services, Mike Sackett, now Director of Operations in Kenya. "WFP-assisted projects are now designed with the flexibility to be able to respond to a country's changing food-aid requirements as well as to emergency situations. Donors are aware of this facility and that their pledges have both emergency and development potential."

WFP realizes that there is a close link between poverty and vulnerability to recurring emergencies. "If the food security of the most vulnerable people is reduced, it should be possible to reduce future emergency needs", says Mike Sackett. "The real strength of development projects is that they are doing something for the long-term capacity of people – not just feeding them today".



WFP/Jeremy Hartley

When drought and civil war threatened Chad in 1984 WFP arranged for the supply of a pontoon bridge – locally constructed and funded by the EEC – to enable food to be taken across the Chari river.

Emergency and refugee operations

The number and complexity of emergency relief operations has increased so dramatically that relief agencies are hard-pressed to respond with adequate speed and efficiency. In January 1992 new working arrangements between UNHCR and WFP resulted in WFP assuming the responsibility for procuring and delivering food commodities to UNHCR-managed refugee feeding operations, which partly explains the amount of resources directed to "emergency requirements".

The most striking change in the nature of emergency situations is the increase in civil conflict and the danger of providing relief in these situations. Civil war often coincides with natural disasters to produce large-scale complex emergencies. The Horn of Africa required emergency food for 15.7 million people in 1992 as civil war ravaged Somalia and the Sudan. In West Africa, conflict in Liberia spilled over into Guinea, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, resulting in one of the largest protracted refugee situations. Ongoing warfare in Angola threatened – and sometimes targeted – relief supplies brought in by air.

One of WFP's most successful interventions was the response to the drought in southern Africa, where timely intervention managed to stave off disaster for 18 million people threatened with famine. This example underlines the value of WFP's focus on disaster prevention and mitigation.

By assisting labour-intensive projects to provide employment, alleviate poverty and strengthen self-help capacity, and by improving the infrastructure needed to increase agricultural production and stimulate rural development, WFP aims to strengthen countries and to protect them in emergencies. This, combined with sharper targeting of food aid and social services, should improve the wellbeing of the world's poor so that they are better able to cope when disaster strikes.

by Sue Cullinan

Malawi

From father to son

In the 51°C heat, José dos Santos is busy building a mud-and-pole hut to protect himself and his pregnant wife from the blistering sun. There is not a tree in sight among the sea of huts which extend for miles and miles, because the refugees have cut them down for fuelwood.

José dos Santos, 22, and his wife walked for a week to reach the safe haven of Nsanje District, in the southern tip of Malawi, to flee the drought that combined with the war has devastated Mozambique. "*Fome, fome* (hunger), forced us to leave," he says. "People were dying. There was nothing to eat."

WFP/Mercedes Sayagués

That was in August 1992, when southern Africa was parched by the worst drought of the century. Crops were wiped out, cattle lay dying, rivers stopped flowing. Some 18 million people were at serious risk of hunger, possibly starvation, if aid did not reach them in time.

Mozambique, which is considered the poorest country in the world and has the highest child mortality rate, had the additional scourge of civil war which shattered Mozambique's already weak infrastructure. Destroyed bridges, mined roads, roofless buildings were to be seen everywhere. The economy was at a standstill.

In a year of good rains, subsistence farmers can feed themselves. But in 1991/92, when drought hit eight of Mozambique's 10 provinces, famine was imminent. Tens of thousands of rural Mozambicans began the trek to Malawi, to join the more than one million refugees already there who survived thanks to WFP food rations. Among them were José dos Santos and his wife.

The couple walked, mostly at night, and hid in the bush whenever they heard people. They owned little and carried nothing, just their ragged clothes and one prized possession that José wanted to show me.

"I have some money from the old times," he says. "Could you please tell me how much it is worth?" He explains that his father gave the coin to him before dying, telling him to keep it in a safe place. Throughout the years of war, José buried it in different places near his plot of land.

When the couple fled to Malawi, the wife hid the coin in her tattered *capulana*, the piece of cloth wrapped around her waist that is her only clothing. José shows me the coin. It is a train token from Nyasaland Railways – Malawi was called Nyasaland during colonial times – with the head of Queen Elizabeth II on it.

Ten months later, in July 1993, I am travelling in Zambezia, where José dos Santos came from. The drought has broken and a peace agreement between Renamo and the Government is holding. Mozambique has had a good harvest. The number of people needing food aid has decreased from 3.8 million to 1.1 million. Refugees are returning spontaneously, about 300,000 so far. Through the Mozambican Red Cross and World Vision, WFP provides food for the returnees.

In Zambezia, more than one million people – one-third of its population – are on the move, displaced people going back home. Along recently opened roads, peasants are busy clearing land, planting crops, building mud-and-pole huts, taking dried fish and baskets to the markets. Hopefully José dos Santos and his wife are among them.

by Mercedes Sayagués

Mercedes Sayagués, WFP's Senior Information Officer, is based in Zimbabwe.

WFP Mercedes Sayagues

Southern Africa

A disaster averted

In 1992, while the world's attention was riveted on emaciated Somali children, at the same time, on the same continent, the largest preventive operation ever was unfolding successfully in drought-hit southern Africa – a relief effort based on regional cooperation that effectively avoided a disaster for 18 million people at serious risk.

Together, the 10 Southern African Development Community countries (SADC) whose members include Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, together with South Africa, experienced the worst drought in this century. There was a larger crop failure than the Horn of Africa in the mid-1980s. Roughly five times more food had to be brought into the region than was shipped to the Horn during the famine of 1984/85. The southern region, usually a food exporter, had to import 11.6 million tonnes of food with an estimated food and transport cost of US$4 billion. This volume, a six-fold increase above normal imports, was to be added to existing transport flows.

Much of this huge amount of food had to be brought into landlocked countries (Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana) through long overland routes and a network of ports, roads and railways geared for exports, not imports. It involved complex and daunting logistics and also put great strain on the regional transport system.

Only unprecedented regional coordination could cope with such a challenge. Six transport corridors and 12 ports (Dar es Salaam, Nacala, Beira, Maputo, Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, Walvis Bay, Namibe, Lobito and Luanda) were used to bring in the food commodities. Berthing priorities, port congestion, warehousing, discharge of ships and loading onto trains, border crossings, customs, tolls and levies, transshipments, maintenance and many other problems had to be solved to move food – both aid and commercial – smoothly.

The region, however, had some comparative advantages: with the exception of war-ravaged Angola and Mozambique, it has a fairly good infrastructure of rail, roads and communications; a strong commercial sector, and, most importantly, the commitment of governments and donors that people would not go hungry, that the drought would not turn into a famine.

The drought occurred at a time when countries in the region were facing economic recession, structural adjustment and soaring unemployment. In addition, civil wars in Angola and Mozambique spilled over into neighbouring countries as refugees fleeing drought and violence poured in, especially into Malawi, host to almost a million Mozambicans.

Needs and pledges

The alarm was sounded early by the Global Information and Early Warning System on Food And Agriculture of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the SADC Regional Early Warning Systems and the US-funded Famine Early Warning System. At the end of January 1992, the early warnings were substantiated with reports of food shortages, dwindling water supplies and deaths of cattle due to lack of grazing. In March, a joint Food and Agriculture Organization/World Food Programme mission with the support of other UN agencies, assessed the needs in the 10 SADC countries and published a special alert. Between April and May, Governments, donors, the UN family and NGOs reviewed the situation and drew up relief plans.

The potential consequences of the disaster led the UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) to launch the joint UN/SADC appeal in New York in the presence of the Secretary General and organized a pledging meeting in early June in Geneva. The appeal requested US$845 million in emergency aid, including 1.6 million tonnes of targeted food aid (for vulnerable groups and the poorest segments of the population with very limited purchasing power) and 2.6 million tonnes of programme food aid (for the market sector to enable people who had money to purchase food) for the SADC countries only.

Donors responded generously and quickly, especially the US, which began preparations as early as December 1991. In terms of pledges, by December 1992, countries had received pledges very close to their targeted food aid needs.

The United Nations designated the World Food Programme to act as its coordinator for this massive logistics operation. Working jointly with SADC, WFP coordinated the flow of food aid, including commercial imports throughout the region by establishing a Logistical Advisory Centre (LAC) in Harare with a Support Unit in Johannesburg within the South African Railway and Port Authorities network. Port and railway operations were coordinated through some 20 logistics experts posted to key points on the network and funded through WFP by several donors.

Regional Coordination

The LAC generously funded by several donors, was a unique cooperative effort that coordinated relief logistics throughout the region. It provided a working link between donors, SADC governments, shipping agents, contractors and transport operators to deliver food (aid and commercial) swiftly.

The LAC compiled and shared regional information on drought–relief procurement, importation, distribution and shortfalls, and the flows of food. In addition, the LAC obtained funds from donors, including the US, the Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, UK, Luxembourg and the African Development Bank, to eliminate bottlenecks in SADC countries. The LAC made it possible to buy, lease or borrow equipment; install communication and signalling systems; repair rail wagons and tracks; buy stacking machines, weighing scales, tarpaulins, radios and faxes; and to repair and maintain roads and bridges. The improvements made on the regional transport system will remain in place once the drought is over.

The weekly shipping bulletin issued by the LAC contained up-to-date detailed information on all drought-related shipments – commodities, volume, destination port, arrival and discharge dates, etc. Obtaining, checking and collating this vast amount of information – more than 1,000 consignments with 25,000 information elements – was a major undertaking that involved daily contact with ports, railways, shippers and donors. Handling up-to-date information about shipments, bottlenecks and needs, the LAC could ask donors and shippers to divert or speed shipments according to need.

UN Agencies, Governments and non-governmental organizations all participated in the relief effort. Country by country information on drought was issued by Agencies and consolidated by DHA in Geneva in monthly reports.

The relief effort demanded careful planning and unprecedented regional coordination. The experience gained and links forged will continue to play a constructive role in the region after the drought is over. As an example of regional cooperation, in December 1992, when warned by LAC of impending shortage of food for the commercial sector in Malawi, SADC countries agreed to give priority to Malawi-bound shipments and to loan Malawi grain from built-up stocks in other countries.

WFP Brenda Barton

Coordinated efforts between governments, UN agencies and NGOs ensured that food reached the needy quickly.

Logistics highlights

In the largest such effort in Africa, between 1 April 1992 and 30 April 1993, 11.6 million tonnes of drought-related commodities – cereals, non-cereals and fertilizer – were imported into Southern Africa including South Africa.

Beira in Mozambique ranked first among the SADC ports, handling 1.3 million tonnes of food. Durban forwarded about the same amount for the SADC countries and in addition handled four million tonnes of imports for South Africa.

More than 95 per cent of the food flow into landlocked countries was by rail. Slightly less than half of the imports for Zimbabwe from Beira moved by road and virtually all shipments for Malawi were transshipped from rail to road near Harare or at Mbeya in Tanzania. The rail corridor through Beitbridge was the most utilised, transporting more than one-third of the total.

Moving large volumes of food aid by rail put a strain on the rail system, demanding additional maintenance of track and rolling stock, additional equipment and technical upgrading. Donor funding through LAC helped the local rail administrations solve these problems.

Despite the huge additional demand – close to 3.5 million tonnes more than in a normal year – placed on the regional transport system, it coped very well except for minor problems such as low quantities delivered on the Tazara (Northern Corridor) and Zimbabwe Railway Limited railway's lack of locomotives along the Beira Corridor, occasional bunching of trains at Beitbridge (Southern Corridor) and congestion at the ports of Beira and Maputo. To overcome border crossing problems, WFP also intervened on several occasions to facilitate the removal of restrictions at border crossings and inequitable toll fees. Governments in the region also agreed to keep borders open longer to facilitate truck movements. A major boost for the transportation of food aid to Malawi in particular was the signing of the Peace Accord in Mozambique which paved the way for an increase in the number of trucks passing through the Tete Corridor.

The good performance was mainly due to large investments in the improvement of infrastructure and training of transport professionals carried out through the Southern Africa Transport and Communication Commission of SADC during the 1980s. Because of good infrastructure and the existence of a dynamic private sector it was not necessary to import a whole logistics system and people, as has been the case in other African emergencies.

Security along the Eastern Corridors through war-torn Mozambique posed less problems than forecast. Food began moving

Zambia

A new job for Joffrey Mwanga

For the first time in his life Joffrey Mwanga is making bricks and getting paid in food. "There are no alternatives: it's either food-for-work or hunger," he says.

In a normal year, Joffrey Mwanga harvests enough maize and groundnuts for his family plus some to sell. But in 1992, when the maize was knee-high and looking promising, drought hit southern Zambia. The wiry farmer has eight children to feed, the oldest aged 10, and his four-hectare farm yielded nothing because of the drought.

For days and days Joeffrey watched the cloudless sky in anguish; then he watched the maize wither and die. The family ate all its reserves, then the seeds. Of their four cows, three died of tick-borne corridor disease and the remaining cow was sold when the grazing finished. Wild roots, fruits and leaves appeared in the only meal of the day. Both adults and children began to lose weight.

The Mwanga family survived thanks to a food-for-work scheme, implemented by the nearby mission at Macha, to enlarge the hospital. The food was provided by WFP. In previous years, the mission had trouble recruiting the 30 or so workers for the scheme, and those who volunteered were mostly women. But in 1992, more than 100 people, men and women alike, showed up every day asking to join.

At the height of the drought, in August 1992, 3,000 people were working for food near Macha Mission. Some walked 30 kilometres to get to the work site. Many were so hungry they would pick up precious grains left on the ground after the trucks unloaded the relief food. Among them was Joffrey Mwanga, who worked for five hours a day making bricks out of the rich red clay.

WFP assisted food-for-work schemes were organized by NGOs all over drought-stricken Zambia. Each worker with five dependents received 75 kilogrammes per month, or one-and-a half bags, slightly above the

WFP/Mercedes Sayagués

internationally accepted survival ration. Only the sick or disabled, the elderly and those unable to work qualified for free food.

This response to drought, based on NGOs and food-for-work, was new in Zambia. In the 1987 drought, the previous Government heavily subsidized the staple food – maize – and distributed free food through local officials and party leaders which led to discrimination and favouritism. "This way is better because if you don't work, you don't get food," says Joffrey Mwanga. "Free, free, we are always expecting food for free but that is no good."

The Zambian Government agrees that free food can make people dependent and that Zambians should be encouraged to buy or work for their food as much as possible, in order to retain their dignity and tradition of self-sufficiency.

Communities decided themselves what kind of projects were to be undertaken. The National Programme to Prevent Malnutrition (PPM) set out the policy and the NGO, Programme Against Malnutrition, coordinates the logistics and implementation of the drought-relief operation with the help of volunteers.

In 1993 the rains came and Zambia had an excellent maize harvest. By June 1993, when the drought-relief operation was over, PPM had distributed more than four million bags of maize and reached more than two million people. Among these was the Mwanga family. They are just a footnote in the history of the drought but proof of the success of Zambia's response.

by Mercedes Sayagués

into previously inaccessible Renamo-held territory once the Peace Agreement between the Government of Mozambique and RENAMO was signed in Rome on 4 October 1992.

At country level

Although each country chose its own approach to drought relief, generally Governments, UN agencies and NGOs pooled efforts, resources and expertise to deliver aid to the needy while avoiding duplication and overlapping. Decentralized and effective provincial, district and ward councils played a key role.

Non-Governmental Organizations, such as Save the Children, Oxfam, Lutheran World Federation, World Vision International, Caritas, Care, Red Cross, Africare, Concern, Food for the Hungry International, Catholic Relief Services and other missions and churches, were often responsible for the final distribution of food. Unicef devoted resources to providing potable water to thirsty villages. Food-for-work schemes proved very successful, especially in Zambia. Supplementary feeding schemes at schools and health clinics helped keep children and mothers in good health, notably in Zimbabwe and Botswana. Vulnerable household feeding was the strategy in Lesotho.

Among the problems encountered, difficulties in registering beneficiaries in some countries made for weak targeting. Inadequate reporting and monitoring at provincial level hampered the relief effort in Namibia and Botswana. War-ravaged Angola and Mozambique were a logistics nightmare. Swaziland and Lesotho had a late start in drought relief but finally succeeded in moving the food where it was needed.

By March 1993, widespread rains had blessed Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and, although delayed, Mozambique and Botswana, where the crops were in good health. However, the areas planted were smaller because farmers faced shortages of animal-drought power, tractors, seeds, fertilizer and tools – critically so in the case of Mozambique. The region will need a few years to fully recover – but few lives were lost and a disaster was averted because people, Governments and donors cooperated in helping those in need.

The Southern Africa Drought Emergency operation will go down in the annals of history as a great success – especially for the international committee, the SADC member governments and the millions of people who could have become victims of the drought.

by Mercedes Sayagués

Mercedes Sayagués, WFP's Senior Information Officer, is based in Zimbabwe.

Kenya

Twist of fate brings hope

WFP/Brenda Barton

Zamzam Ibrahim says her days as a nomad are over. She now has a new life, a different life. She is a mat maker.

When she arrived last year in the town of Wajir, northeast Kenya, Zamzam was desperate. She, her husband and their five small children had to leave the bush when the drought which swept through Kenya killed the last of their animals.

"I was brought to this town by problems," she said. "I had many camels and goats. They all died. It took one month to travel to Wajir – it was very far, I don't even know how far. There was drought before, about 10 years ago, but it was not as serious," says Zamzam. "It never affected our livestock like this one – this was the worst."

For the last year Zamzam has been able to keep her family alive thanks to WFP, which has provided food assistance to a million drought victims in Kenya. The Wajir District Commissioner, Obondo Kajumbi, said that over the last three years, people in the district lost 70 per cent of their cattle and goats, and 30 per cent of their camel herds. Although some rain had fallen earlier this year, the rains alone would not resolve the problem.

"A pastoralist economy does not recover from the shock of drought with rains," he said. "Herds must be rebuilt. The gestation period of a camel is 14 months and the camels are not yet even in calf."

Zamzam says that she did not like relying on others to feed her family. She was very uncomfortable with what she perceived to be the loss of dignity attached to receiving free food. "I always felt embarrassed because I'm not used to it," she said.

So after 38 years of life as a nomad, Zamzam became a professional mat maker. "Now that my animals have died, I have to earn money from what I produce," she explained.

Mat making, although practised by some nomadic women, was new to Zamzam. She was unfamiliar with the art of weaving palm leaves into large square floor mats. Nor had she ever transformed strands of tall elephant grass into thick hut covers.

It took "quite a time" to learn how to make mats, Zamzam said. Although her fingers were nimble from years of milking animals, it took much patience to gently coax the long dry grass into tightly uniform patterns.

Zamzam is now the head of the women's mat-making group assisted by WFP, whose number has increased from four to 20. To support the women while they make or sell their mats, WFP provides food-for-work rations.

The women keep 50 per cent of the profit from the sale of the mats and the other half is reinvested to buy more materials for mat making.

Out of the natural disaster which Zamzam thought would be her family's ruin, new skills and opportunities have emerged. The eldest of Zamzam's children now attends primary school in Wajir – the first person in the Ibrahim family to receive formal education.

Although admittedly nostalgic for her past life, Zamzam is optimistic for what the future holds. She is also very appreciative of the humanitarian assistance she has received. "We really need you people, your help," she said. "We have nothing; you are our saviours."

by Brenda Barton

Brenda Barton is a WFP Information Officer based in Nairobi.

Delivering the food

WFP Jeff Share

In its 30 years of existence, WFP has delivered more than 40 million tonnes of food aid to 90 countries. A remarkable amount for an agency that started as an experimental developmental programme, with one commodity officer and one shipping officer to handle less than 200,000 tonnes of surplus food per year from donor to recipient country.

Today, WFP transports more food aid than any other organization. In 1992 alone, 5.2 million tonnes of food was moved by sea, air, river, road and rail. At any one time, an average of half a million tonnes of WFP food aid is in transit across the high seas.

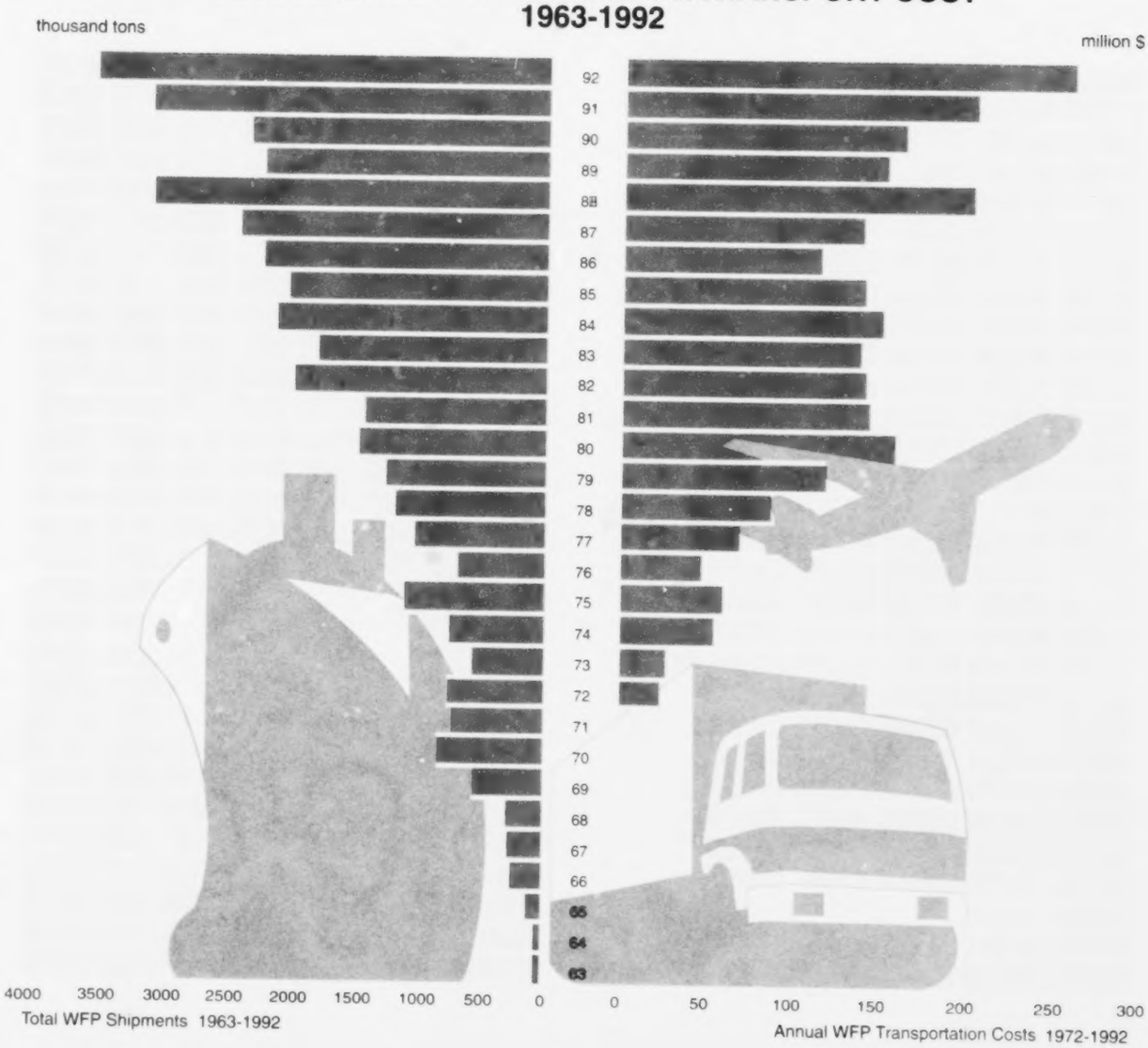
The Programme has always made its own transport arrangements, adopting international commercial practices. In the early years the delivery process was simple and WFP's responsibility limited. Shipments initiated in the donor country were received at the point of entry by the recipient government which then took over the costs and responsibility for delivering food to the targeted recipients. As a result, North Africa and the Near East, because of their existing administrative and logistical infrastructures, received over 40 per cent of WFP project aid in the first 10 years of WFP's existence.

Dirk de Wit, one of the Programme's longest serving staff members and Chief of the Shipping Branch explains that "Thirty years ago the Programme mainly dealt with development projects and the quantities handled were relatively small so we booked shipments through liner parcels with the occasional charter. Today, the pendulum has swung the other way; over 60 per cent of our shipments are for emergency and refugee operations. We now book more charter than liner vessels as it is more economically viable."

As the Programme began to grow and requests for the urgent delivery of emergency food assistance increased, WFP's shipping section began to deal with general transport and logistics support. In 1975 a subsidy was introduced for internal transport, shipping and handling costs (ITSH) to enable least developed countries to improve the implementation of project food aid. ITSH costs were initially paid directly to the recipient country but today WFP increasingly handles internal transport costs, carrying out constant checks to ensure that these are kept to a minimum.

WFP gained invaluable experience during the 1983-85 African famine-relief operation when it established itself not only as a supplier of food aid but also as a large-scale logistics operator and a principal coordinator of international relief efforts. WFP established an in-house Africa Task Force and a

COMPARATIVE WFP SHIPMENTS/TRANSPORT COST 1963-1992



network of port and logistics experts to cover the main ports and overland transit points to ensure the flow of food aid, particularly to landlocked countries. The Programme also set up and managed large truck fleets for the internal transport and distribution of international relief food aid in Ethiopia, Sudan and Chad.

WTOE – WFP's Transport Operation in Ethiopia – was created in 1985 as a non-profit self-financing organization to increase off-take from the congested ports of Massawa and Assab during the drought-relief effort. It is still the largest UN truck fleet with more than 300 trucks and trailers and has delivered more than 2.4 million tonnes to drought-afflicted people.

In Somalia in December 1992, when it proved impossible to obtain reliable and cost-effective transport in Mogadishu, 50 WTOE trucks, with their familiar blue and white markings, were airlifted or shipped to Mogadishu to increase port off-take and provide long-haul transport to the interior. Some of these trucks have now been redeployed to Rwanda to deliver emergency food aid to 900,000 people.

Over the years WFP has become expert at finding innovative ways of delivering food and circumventing problems by using, amongst other means, airlifts, airdrops, barges and landing crafts. In logistics terms, WFP regards airlifts as a last resort. One of the first large-scale airlifts was in 1983, when food was flown to Uganda from Ethiopia during the Karamoja emergency.

Other massive airlift and airdrop operations are now part of the Programme's history. For example, the 1991 airlift in Ethiopia and the 1992-3 Somali operation when WFP coordinated all relief flights from Kenya. Relying on the bravery and dedication of pilots and their crews, WFP often has to deliver food and other vital relief supplies to trapped civilians in war-zones, for example in Angola.

Today, the situation has not changed and relief flights are only undertaken when they are the only way to deliver life-sustaining food

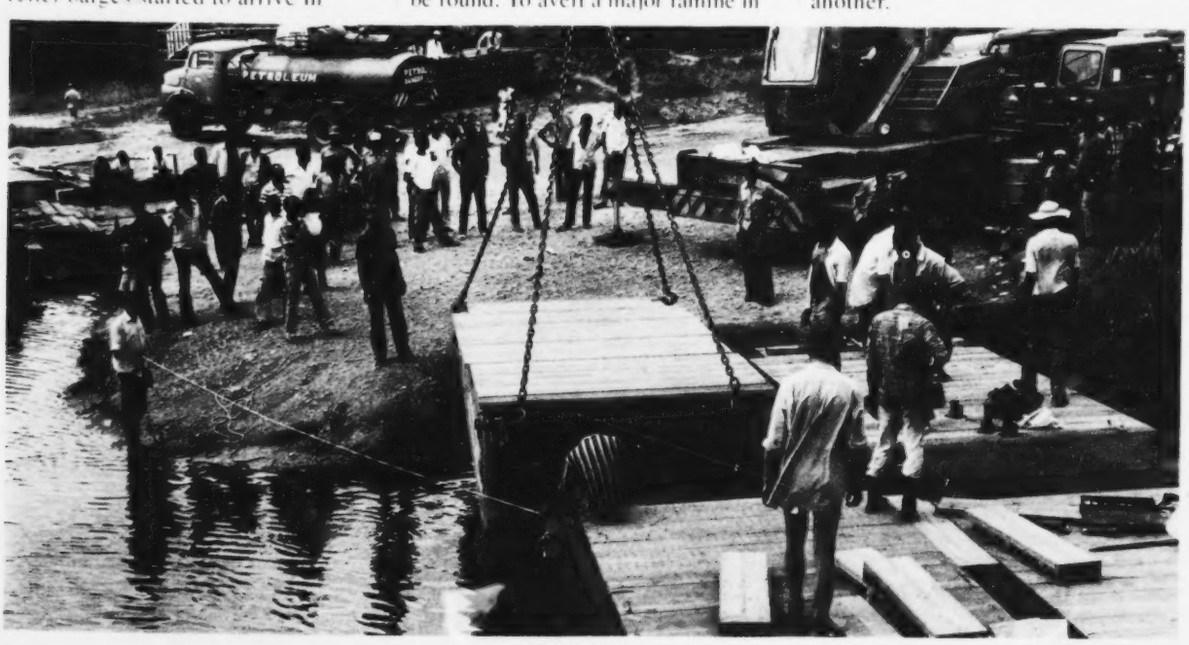
to stricken areas. However, WFP's pioneering use of the huge Antonov Ilyushin planes belonging to the former Soviet Union has opened up new possibilities, as by using these aircraft, costs are greatly reduced and in some cases are competitive with surface transport.

Apart from air deliveries, countless other initiatives have increased delivery capacity and improved the efficiency and economic management of food transport. Highly qualified officers, with experience in the private sector, are constantly masterminding new schemes to deliver food cheaply and quickly. In 1991 for example, thanks to WFP's perseverance in negotiating a safe river corridor, relief barges started to arrive in Nasir, Sudan, after travelling more than 800 kilometres along the Nile and Sobat Rivers. Today, deliveries by barge convoys in the Sudan are increasing, even though they can be delayed by lack of clearances, insecurity or looting incidents.

In the same year WFP opened the port of Massawa, which had been closed for nearly a year due to the war, thus enabling food deliveries through battle lines to both sides of the conflict. Also in 1991, WFP spent more than US$4 million to upgrade port facilities in Eritrea to increase food-aid deliveries both to Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Delivering food to landlocked countries is often problematic and alternative routes frequently have to be found. To avert a major famine in Chad in 1984/85, when the route through Nigeria was closed, convoys were directed via Cameroon where a combination of logistical initiatives undertaken by WFP increased deliveries from 6,000 to 36,000 tonnes a month.

WFP has gained a reputation for successful liaison and negotiation with governments and warring parties in order to arrange access to areas in need. The recent reopening of the direct route from Kampala, Uganda to Kigali, Rwanda, so that food aid can be delivered to displaced Rwandese is one example. The highly successful logistics coordination carried out by WFP during the great southern Africa drought of 1992/93 is another.



WFP Jeff Share

In 1989 delivering food aid to southern Sudan was difficult. Roads were inaccessible and many bridges had either been destroyed or could not carry the weight of heavy trucks. One of the solutions WFP found was to fly in a pontoon ferry to Kenya which was then taken by road through Kenya and installed in Uganda.

Over the years, WFP has undertaken extensive upgrading of transport facilities in many countries: road repairs in Côte d'Ivoire and the Sudan; providing trucks to Mali and Niger; railway improvements in Senegal and Djibouti; port handling improvements in Angola and Mozambique; and river crossing facilities in Chad and Mali, are only some of the examples. Food-for-work projects are also used to help improve transport infrastructure. In Monrovia WFP gave port workers food rations to speed up unloading.

On any one day WFP staff are troubleshooting problematic shipments, negotiating with shipping agents, resolving pipeline problems, redeploying convoys, checking port and storage conditions, modifying off-take rates and pre-positioning stocks to ensure that warehouses at distribution sites are never empty or truck fleets idle. Borrowing or buying food from local storage sources or nearby countries is one measure taken to ensure constant supplies. The setting up of complex logistics systems in Mozambique in 1982/83 enabled large-scale purchases of maize in Zimbabwe. Together with similar purchases in Kenya and Uganda, such "triangular transactions" have led to a dramatic saving in transport costs and a reduction in delivery times.

Diversion of ships en route for another country is another method used to speed up deliveries. With an average of 50 ships on charter to WFP at any one time, this rapid response facility has proven to be an enormous asset to the Programme in emergencies.

Sudan

Healing the wounds of hunger

Along the sleepy Sobat River lies the town of Akobo, home to some 17,000 southern Sudanese, most of whom belong to the Nuer Tribe. It has rained for four days. John Yieo, a 35-year-old local nurse, watches sadly as a relief plane, laden with food and medicine, is forced to turn back to Lokichoggio in northern Kenya.

The long-awaited rain, while desperately needed by the farmers, has turned the dirt airstrip into a stream of black mud, cutting off thousands of starving people who are totally dependent on the food delivered by WFP relief planes.

Under Operation Lifeline Sudan, WFP is delivering food aid to approximately one million people in southern Sudan, by truck through Uganda, by boat along the Nile and Sobat Rivers, and by air to areas which cannot be reached in any other way, for distribution in feeding centres and hospitals. The Programme also helps by transporting medical supplies and NGO personnel.

John, who was born and raised in Akobo, remembers more prosperous times, before the civil war and the drought. "Life seemed much simpler. Food was abundant, there were many cows grazing and the market was busy from early morning until sunset. Twice a week we had a dance which continued until the early hours of the morning".

In 1988, when Akobo was attacked by the rebel SPLA movement, John had to flee for his life. "With some other people I managed to escape to Ethiopia. We walked for long days until we reached Gambella in Ethiopia. We stayed in camps and were looked after by local and international organizations."

In 1991, when the security situation in Akobo improved, John decided to return home.

"Many buildings had been destroyed and the people were very thin and looked weak. This saddened me very much and I decided to help reconstruct the town," says John in a tired voice.

John started work at Akobo Hospital, which is run by Médecins sans frontières. Built by the International Council of Churches between 1980 and 1984, the hospital only operated for a short time before the war broke out. WFP provides food rations of maize and sorghum for patients in the 30-bed hospital and for the hospital's 68 staff, including John.

WFP/Suzan Samson

"I receive food for work" says John, "which means that I have no salary. Instead I get a daily ration of one kilogramme of maize or sorghum for working in the hospital. The hospital also provides basic clothing for myself and my family and a uniform. This is very important as there is no longer a market where you can buy clothes in Akobo."

John feels confident about the future. "The security situation has been fairly stable for the last two years. The hospital patients are in good hands, the primary school is functioning, people have started to renovate some of the buildings and the fishing cooperative, also helped by WFP, provides enough fish to sell to the hospital and to other towns."

"Hopefully we will receive enough rain this season to be able to harvest in time and with luck we should be self-reliant by 1994."

by Suzan Samson

Suzan Samson is the Information Assistant in the Regional Information Office in Nairobi.

In collaboration with the Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO), WFP developed its own charter-party form – WORLDFOOD – which further enhanced the Programme's standing as a major charterer in the world freight market. As communications are vital in all logistics operations, special radio and satellite systems, which are upgraded constantly, have been installed in several countries.

An indispensable and integral part of the Programme is the Insurance Branch which, from the beginning of the Programme's history, has provided cargo insurance and dealt with claims, cargo care, attended to charter party disputes and acted as the Division's legal advisor.

As the biggest "spender" of WFP's cash resources the Transport and Logistic Division is fully aware that it needs to be also its biggest "saver" of scarce cash resources. In 1992 US$354.4 million was spent on the delivery of both programme and emergency food aid.

WFP bears the responsibility of delivering food aid to millions of poor people worldwide, often in situations where delays can have tragic consequences. Its proven track record over the years has resulted in it being generally recognized throughout the system as the "Logistics Arm of the UN", a reputation that WFP fully intends to enhance and strengthen.

by Sarah Longford

Sarah Longford is the Reports Officer in the Horn and East of Africa Bureau.

Antigua

Women train to become independent

It is 5 pm at the headquarters of the Antigua Directorate of Women's Affairs (DWA). More than a dozen women, ranging in age from 15 to 50, are gathered in a small room crammed with stoves, tables and a blackboard. Gwendolyn Tonge closes her office door, rolls up her sleeves and prepares to help teach the weekly food- preserving course.

WFP/Lauren Drewery

"Nowadays our women have to look after their homes, feed and educate their children and pay all the bills. They can't depend on anyone else, so they have to become more self-reliant," says Ms Tonge, the energetic head of the Directorate. Under her supervision, the DWA offers women practical training in growing and preserving food, weaving, making clothes, basic carpentry and simple home and car repairs.

The main purpose of the training is to enable women to earn income. "For example, we not only teach the women how to grow food at home for their families – which will save them money – but also how to sell the surplus to the market, or to hotels and restaurants, and earn some cash," explains Ms Tonge.

A shelf in the kitchen displays the trainees' best-selling preserves – pepper sauce, guava jelly, pineapple jam and corn relish. "Growing your own food is very important because our country imports nearly everything we eat," Ms Tonge says. "We want to teach the women how to grow and appreciate local food."

The DWA also offers courses in household management. "Women need skills to handle payments for food, medical bills, utilities and mortgages," she says. "In our management course we study everything from making shopping lists, simple accounting and marketing, to running a home business."

The courses run for two to three hours per week for a period of six months. About 100 unemployed or partially employed women participate in the courses each term; most are single heads of households. The programme is supported by the Ministry of Education with assistance from the World Food Programme. WFP provides funds raised through the monetization of locally purchased commodities. The funds are used to compensate participants for their transport costs to and from the course.

Ms Tonge set up a weaving programme to show women how to make marketable products using local materials. "We send our cotton to Japan, then it comes back to us as fine fabric that sells on our market at prices no Antiguan can afford," says Ms Tonge. "Well, we may not match their quality but we can make similar articles for a lot less." The women in the programme now make school sashes for students and place mats for local hotels and restaurants. They spin their own cotton and make their own dyes from local plants such as aloe vera, hibiscus and mahogany bark.

Training courses like these are invaluable in the Eastern Caribbean, where about half the households are headed by women and over 80 per cent of women are mothers. "In most cases, it's the woman who carries the burden in the family," says Ms Tonge. They act as providers, decision-makers, household managers and child-rearers – usually without the support of a full-time partner.

While skills training can make women more self-sufficient, Ms Tonge believes that any real change will come about only through education at home and the establishment of male role models. "Our sons have to learn how to cook, to share the housework. They need to be taught to be real fathers," she says.

by Lauren Drewery

Lauren Drewery is a freelance film producer.

The opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily those of WFP.

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The World Food Programme
was established in 1963
as the food-aid organization
of the United Nations.

At the request of governments,
WFP provides food aid
for development projects
to increase agricultural production,
rehabilitate roads
and other vital infrastructure,
protect the environment
and improve health and education.

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